

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM INDIANA - QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q-1. How can I get involved in WRP?

- A. Check with your local USDA Service Center or Conservation District to sign up. NRCS, with input from FWS and State wildlife agencies, will determine if the acres you offer are eligible for the program. Landowners with high priority acres – based on competitive selection – will receive an offer.

Q-2. How much will I get for my land?

- A. The program offers landowners three options: permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements of a minimum 10-year duration.

Permanent Easement. This is a conservation easement in perpetuity. Easement payment will be the lesser of: the agricultural value of the land, an established payment cap, or an amount offered by the landowner. In addition to paying for the easement, USDA pays 100 percent of the costs of restoring the wetland. The maximum payment cap for Indiana is \$2,000 on permanent easements.

30-Year Easement. This is a conservation easement lasting 30 years. Easement payments are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement. USDA also pays 75 percent of restoration costs. The maximum payment cap for 30-year easements is \$1500.

Restoration Cost-Share Agreement. This is an agreement (generally for a minimum of 10 years in duration) to re-establish degraded or lost wetland habitat. USDA pays 75 percent of the cost of the restoration activity. This does not place an easement on the property. The landowner provides the restoration site without reimbursement.

Q-3. What can I do with my land once it is in WRP?

- A. The plan you developed with NRCS identifies the activities necessary to restore, enhance, protect, maintain, and manage the wetland. The restoration plan is dynamic and will change over the years as resource needs are evaluated. You continue to control access to the land--and may lease the land—for hunting, fishing, and other undeveloped recreational activities. At any time, a landowner may request that additional activities be evaluated to determine if they are compatible uses for the site. Compatible uses are allowed if they are fully consistent with the protection and enhancement of the wetland.

Q-4. How much land will I be able to enroll?

- A. Once your eligibility has been determined, we will discuss with you the eligible wetland and surrounding area necessary to restore and sustain the ecosystem. Ideally a mix of wetland and upland acres is desired to meet the needs of the wildlife community and other objectives such as water

quality, flood reduction, and groundwater recharge. Up to a 1:1 ratio of eligible land to other land can be enrolled.

Q-5. Do I need to hire a closing agent, appraiser, surveyor, or lawyer?

- A. Before an easement is recorded, NRCS will arrange for closing services to conduct title searches, acquire title insurance, and perform any other activities necessary to clear the title and complete the easement. The landowner will hire the surveyor and be reimbursed for surveying costs.

Q-6. Will I still have to pay taxes on the easement area?

- A. Yes. The amount of taxes you pay on the easement area is determined by the local taxing authority. Landowners should seek this information before entering the WRP.

Q-7. What can I do about reducing the local property tax when I enroll land in WRP?

- A. This is a local or State decision and NRCS has no authority regarding property or other tax issues. However, we can provide written documentation of the easement to help the landowner discuss this issue with a tax consultant.

Q-8. Are there minimum and maximum acreage requirements?

- A. Permanent and 30-year easements have a five acre minimum size. Restoration cost-share agreements have a one-acre minimum size. There is no maximum acreage cap.

Q-9. What type(s) of practices will be installed on my land?

- A. The program is a wetland program, therefore, the emphasis will be to try and restore as much of the original hydrology as possible. Practices such as tile cuts, ditch plugs, low level dikes and macro-topography (shallow excavation) can be used. Vegetative practices include tree planting, warm season and cool season grass plantings. Vegetative practices are done to maximize wildlife benefits.

Q-10. Can I sell my property after it is enrolled in WRP?

- A. Yes, property can be sold. The easement does stay with the property.

Q-11. Can timber harvest be done on WRP?

- A. Requests for timber harvest have to be authorized by the State Conservationist using the compatible use process.

Q-12. Can ponds be developed on WRP easements?

- A. Program emphasis is on developing wetland habitat for migratory waterfowl. Wetland habitat would typically be areas having saturated soil up to 2-3 feet of shallow water. Ponds are not developed in the WRP Program.

Q-13. What are my chances of getting funded for WRP?

- A. WRP is under a continuous sign up. Applications are taken and the sites are reviewed by NRCS and USFWS personnel. A variety of factors are evaluated. Those sites with the highest ranking are funded. Indiana has typically received 3 to 5 million dollars per year to fund applications. This funding allows NRCS to fund approximately 30% of eligible applications. Unfunded applications are retained in a database and funded as applicants cancel or additional funds become available.

Q-14. How can I find out more about WRP?

- A. Additional information on WRP is available from USDA Service Centers, State Cooperative Extension offices, and local Conservation Districts. Information is also available on USDA's World Wide Web site: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>. Indiana has a success story listed on this web site. Additional questions can be directed to Gerald Roach, WRP Coordinator, phone number (812) 752-2269, ext. 3, or e-mail address is jerry.roach@in.usda.gov.